

With this bill, Congress has taken a strong step to address the turbulence in the housing market. Yet there's more work to be done. The Congress needs to pass legislation permitting State and local governments to issue tax-exempt bonds for refinancing existing home loans. And Congress needs to pass legislation strengthening the independent regulator of Government-sponsored enterprises like Freddie Mac and Fannie Mae, so we can keep them focused on the mission to expand homeownership. Congress needs, as well, to complete work on responsible legislation modernizing the Federal Housing Administration, so that we can give the FHA the necessary flexibility to help hundreds of thousands of additional families qualify for prime-rate financing.

By taking these steps, we can help our homeowners—and we'll help more Americans become homeowners. We want people to have a place they can call their own. After all, it's an essential part of the American Dream. And we want that dream to extend throughout our Nation.

I want to thank the Members for joining us. I wish you all happy holidays. And this is going to make a happy holiday for many homeowners. Thanks for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:05 p.m. in the Roosevelt Room at the White House. H.R. 3648, approved December 20, was assigned Public Law No. 110-142.

Remarks Following a Visit With Wounded Troops at Walter Reed Army Medical Center

December 20, 2007

Thank you all for joining me. I've just come down from a tour of a couple of the wards up there here at Walter Reed. First, I'm inspired by the quality of health care. Americans may wonder whether or not our troops are getting the best possible health care, and they are. They're not only getting great care from good docs and nurses; they're getting a lot of compassion and a lot of love up in the wards. And so I want to thank you all. General, thank you very much for taking the lead.

This past month is the lowest number of patients being admitted here since '02, and that's good news. It's good news for families who worry about their loved ones in harm's way, and it's good news for the staff here who would like nothing more to be—to have nobody come in here. Every time I come to a facility like this, I count my blessings. And one of the great blessings is to be the President of a country that produces such brave men and women.

And so as we head into the holiday seasons, I ask for the good Lord's blessings on those in harm's way and their families. And I want to thank you again, General, for your hospitality. I appreciate you having me. Thank you. Thank you all.

NOTE: The President spoke at 4:14 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Maj. Gen. Carla G. Hawley-Bowland, USA, commanding general, North Atlantic Regional Medical Command and Walter Reed Army Medical Center.

Proclamation 8213—To Implement an Amendment to the Dominican Republic-Central America-United States Free Trade Agreement

December 20, 2007

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

1. On August 5, 2004, the United States entered into the Dominican Republic-Central America-United States Free Trade Agreement (the "Agreement") with Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, and Nicaragua (the "Agreement countries"). The Congress approved the Agreement in section 101(a) of the Dominican Republic-Central America-United States Free Trade Agreement Implementation Act (the "CAFTA-DR Act") (19 U.S.C. 4011).

2. The Parties to the Agreement entered into an amendment to the Agreement on July 27, August 6, and August 14, 2007 (the "Amendment"). The terms of the Amendment are contained in letters of understanding between the United States and the Agreement countries described in sections